

asking for jet airline service or anything of that kind from western Nebraska, it would be nice to have, but that's not what we're asking for. All we want is a way to be able to fly from western Nebraska back to eastern Nebraska, be able to do a meeting and go back the same day. And we can do that now, and that's something that is extremely important for the people from western Nebraska. I think that Senator Scofield has got an excellent idea here. And I think that by setting up the authority, by bringing in possibly a consultant to look at our situation here as to how this state can address the essential air service, I think that we're going to be well on the way to acting on a situation rather than reacting, as Senator Bernard-Stevens said. So many times we're reactive. This time we would be taking positive action. I think that this meets their qualifications very well for a project that is very worthwhile for the State of Nebraska. So I would certainly urge this body to advance 1184 and to support also the A bill, so that we can get going, so that in case we do have problems with federal essential air service money that we are ready, in Nebraska, to put in place our own system so that we can keep alive essential air service. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER BARRETT: Thank you. Senator Wehrbein, followed by Senators Nelson, Smith and Dierks.

SENATOR WEHRBEIN: Yes, Mr. Speaker and members. Just a few comments, I guess, maybe observations. I wanted to ask Senator Scofield a question toward the end. But I've been thinking about public transportation in Nebraska, even in general. And I was interested in Senator Wehrbein's comments about the previous characteristics of rail travel in Nebraska. I've thought of that, too, because 100 years ago already you could get on the train just nearly anywhere in Nebraska. In historical perspective, in my own county, they said that 17 out of 18 precincts had rail transportation 100 years ago. As I remember reading the story of J. Sterling Morton, he was able to get on the train in Nebraska City and go anywhere in the United States at that time. One hundred years ago it was one of the keys to the development of this country. So I guess I support this concept of studying very much, of the importance of learning the value of what air service in Nebraska should be, not only now, but probably for the next century in Nebraska. I think we have to look more and more closely at our public transportation service, whether it's rail or, in this case, airlines. And I will be discussing with you more fully, in time, about the